

The Devout Psalmodist.

T W O
S E R M O N S :

THE FIRST,
Concerning finging PSALMS
with Devotion and Melody.

THE SECOND,
Shewing the Indecency and Irreverence
of Sitting at the Singing of the
solemn PRAISES of GOD.

*Sing unto God with the Voice of Melody, Psal. xlvii. 1.
That ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God,
Rom. xv. 6.*

*Canite cum intellectu : non Bacchantium more vocibus in-
compositis, sed cum rectâ intelligentiâ & devotâ attentione,
Gej. in Psalm xlvii. 7.*

*— Ut per oblectamenta aurium animus in affectum pietatis
assurgat, S. AUG. Confess. 10.*

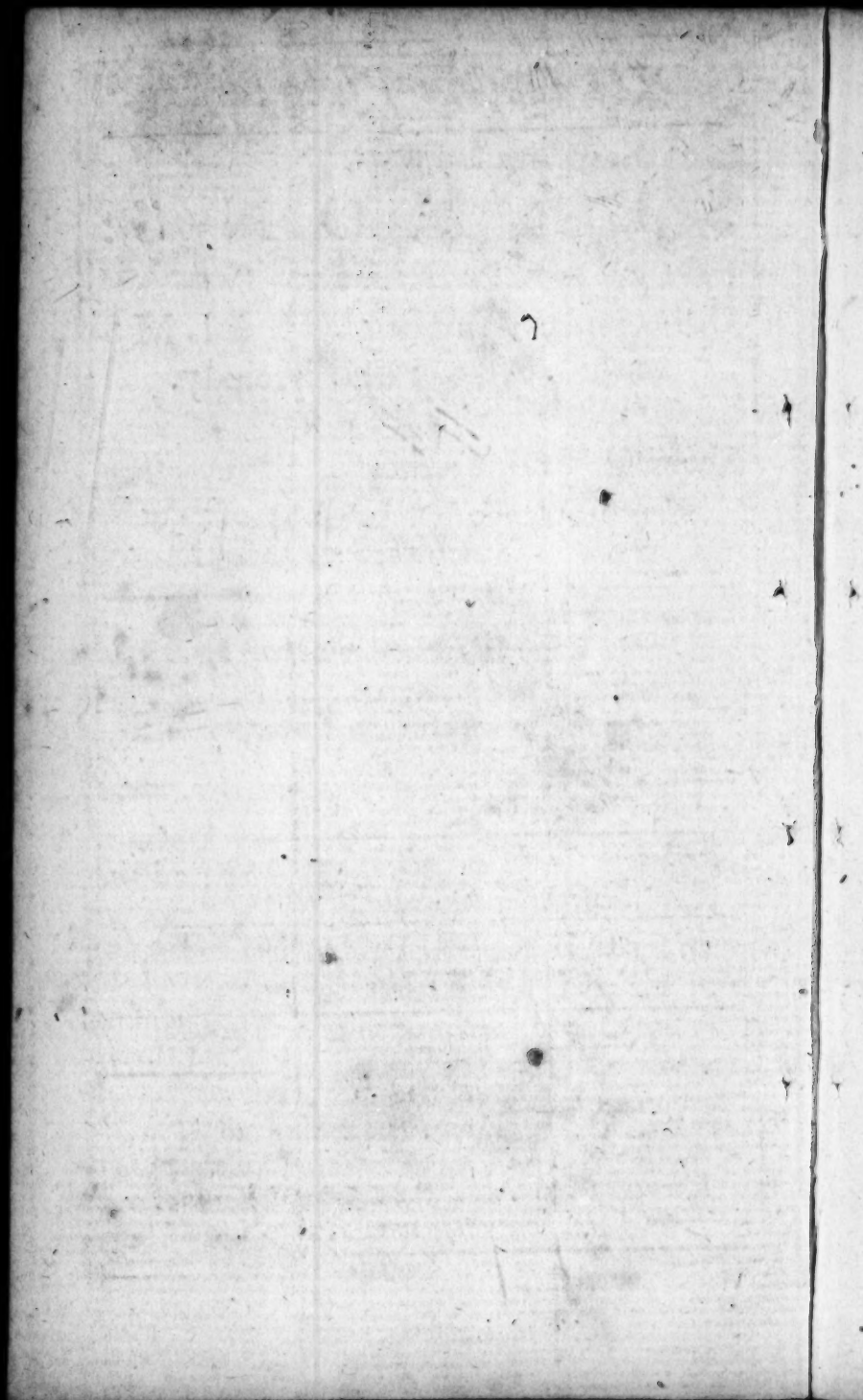
*Inscribed to the SOCIETY for PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.*

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Rector of *Trusham* in *Devon*.

The FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for B. DOD, Bookseller to THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN
KNOWLEDGE, at the *Bible and Key* in *Ave-
Mary Lane*, near *Stationers-Hall*. 1759.





The Devout Psalmodist.

S E R M O N I.

PSAL. xlvii. 7.

— *Sing ye Praises with Understanding.*

 HIS divine Book of *Psalms* is an excellent Collection of devout Hymns, and Forms of solemn Praises to God; which being inspired from Heaven in their Original, are sure to be well-pleasing and acceptable there in their Use; and therefore made up a considerable Part of the *Jewish* Liturgy, as it doth of ours.

It contains the most useful Doctrines and Fundamentals of Faith, as well as the most copious Matter for divine Meditations. Here-

in are set forth and celebrated all the divine Attributes and the wonderful Works of God's Providence over his Church and People. And from this rich Treasury, we may be furnished at all Times with proper Forms for our Devotions, suitable to the present State of the Church, and to every one's particular Case in all Emergencies. So that here we have a plentiful Provision for the Matter of our Duty; and in the Text, a general Direction for the Manner of performing it.

----- *Sing ye Praises with Understanding.*

Which comprehends under it the Particulars following:

I. The Charge is express, *That we Sing.*

II. To sing Praises with *Understanding* implies, that we consider well the Subject and Matter of our Praises, or, *what we Sing.*

III. The Manner of Performance, or, *how we Sing.*

IV. The Object of our Worship, to *whom we Sing.*

The *first* requires, That we all join in singing Psalms and Praises to God in his solemn Worship.

The *second*, That we sing with pious and devout Affections, and with due Attention of Mind.

The *third*, That we do it to the best of our Power, with Harmony and Melody.

The

The *fourth* requires us to perform this holy Exercise with a suitable Reverence, considering the glorious Object of our Worship.

All which we must do, to answer the Charge of the Text, and to *Sing Praises to God with Understanding.*

Singing Praises to God, implies our having a lively and devout Sense of his great Perfections and Benefits, and our expressing this inward Sense, *in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs.*

Praise is so essential to the Worship of God, that it is justly accounted a Duty of natural Religion: All Nations constantly making it one Part of that solemn Worship they give unto their Gods. It is a more noble and eminent Instance of divine Worship than Prayer itself, as answering more immediately and directly the highest End in the World, the Glory of God; which certainly is a more noble End than the Good of the Creature. It is an Angelical Office, and a Taste of the first Fruits of Heaven, while we are here on Earth *. It is a Service of Eternity; for when Prayer and Preaching cease, Praise shall continue for ever, and be the everlasting Employment of the blessed Angels and Saints in Heaven; who, being fixed in a State of unchangeable Happiness, shall have everlasting occasion of

A 3

Praise

— * For all we know

Of what the Blessed do above,
Is that they Sing, and that they Love. WALLER.

Praise and Thanksgiving for that Happiness which they everlastingly enjoy.

There is nothing wherein the Church-militant here on Earth, hath more resemblance to the Church-triumphant in Heaven, than in the sacred and harmonious Way of singing Hallelujahs and solemn Praises to the Glory and Honour of God.

It highly concerns us therefore, that we rightly perform this heavenly Exercise; and in order thereunto, it will be of important Use to us, in each Particular, to have an Eye to the Pattern of the heavenly Choir.

1st, For the Conviction of such negligent and indevout Persons, as look upon this holy Office with such Indifferency, as not to concern themselves at all therein; I shall shew, that we are all unanimously to join in singing Psalms and Praises to God in his solemn Worship; “that we may with one Mind, and one Mouth, glorify God,” Rom. xv. 6.

The Design of using vocal Prayer or Praise in the Congregation, is not to make Him “that planted the Ear, hear;” but that our own Affections may be united by it, and that the whole Congregation may join in one common Address of Prayer, or Praise to God.

The first certain Instance of solemn Worship recorded among the *Israelites*, is a “Form of Praise, sung in Parts by the Men and Women,” after their Deliverance from the *Egyptians*,

Egyptians, Exod. xv. which became afterward the constant Usage of that Church, *Ezra* iii. 10.

And that none may think themselves excused from this Duty, the holy Psalmist calls upon all Degrees, Ages, and Sexes of Mankind, to join in the solemn Praises of God, *Psal.* cxlviii. "Kings of the Earth, and all
" People; Princes, and all Judges of the
" Earth; Young Men and Maids, old Men
" and Children, Praise the Name of the
" Lord."

It is the Charge of God by the Mouth of the Psalmist, that all Mankind should praise their great and glorious Creator: "Praise
" God in his Sanctuary. --- And let every
" Thing that hath Breath, praise the Lord," *Psal.* cl. Nor is he worthy to enjoy the Breath of Life, that will not exercise that Breath to praise his bountiful Creator, that gave both it, and all other Blessings he enjoys.

It was a grateful and pious Resolution of the Son of *Sirach*, "The Lord hath given me
" a Tongue, and I will praise Him there-
" with," *Ecclus.* li. 22. It is the Character of dumb Idols, "to have Mouths, and speak
" not; but of every good Man, to speak of
" God's Honour, and to sing of his Praise in
" his holy Temple," *Psal.* xxix. 9.

In this Respect it is, that holy *David* so often calls his Tongue, his *Glory*; because

the Tongue is the chief Instrument of glorifying God, and was made principally for that End: And they are never so much our *Glory*, as when we so employ them in praising and glorifying our Creator.

So under the New Testament, the Apostles and first Christians joined in the Use of Psalms, as a constant part of divine Worship: and St Paul blames the *Corinthians* for not “having the Psalm all together;” that is, for not joining in it, that all the Congregation might attend one and the same Part of divine Service at the same Time, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26. In like manner he exhorts the *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, *Ephes.* v. 19. *Col.* iii. 16. “To join in the Use of Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs.”

The primitive Christians were so full of Zeal and Devotion, that they would have taken it for a grievous Oppression, to have been restrained from bearing a Part in the Praises of the Church; and whilst the primitive Zeal continued, they never failed to take their Part vocally in the solemn Worship.

So St *Jerom* writes that there was in his Time, a peculiar Order of Singers for setting the Tunes, and ordering the manner of Singing, both Psalms and other Hymns, in the Church, who began the Tune, and then the whole Congregation followed, and sung Psalms and Hallelujahs so loud, that they made

made the gilded Roofs of the Church even shake and echo again†.

In those devouter Ages of Christianity, the Confluence to the public Worship was so great, and the Consent of Heart and Voice so universal, that it is recorded of them, that the Hallelujahs of the Church were like the Noise of many Waters, and their *Amen* like Thunder.

Let us now look to our heavenly Pattern, and see how the Doctrine in Hand accords with it; and there we find the holy Angels all joining in the Praises of God; of whom St. John saw a great Multitude whom no Man could number, which cried with a loud Voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the Throne --- and to the Lamb," *Rev. vii. 10.* And in another Vision of the heavenly Choir, *Rev. xiv.* He heard a Voice as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of great Thunder; and they sung a new Song before the Throne of God:" Which undeniably argues both their united Voices and the vehement Fervor of their Zeal and Devotion. These Testimonies are the more considerable to the present Purpose; because they are also prophetic Representations of the Service to be performed to God in the Christian Church.

The proper Application whereof, I shall give you in the Words of the Constitutions,
called

† Com. Eph. 5. Epitaph. Fabiolæ.

called *Apostolical*. “ As the holy Angels in
“ Heaven glorify God with Consort and
“ united Voices ; so all Men on Earth, with
“ one Mouth and one Mind should glorify
“ the one true God.”

They all, as you have heard, (in the fore-
cited Places, and in many others that might
be added) constantly bear their Parts, and de-
voutly join in celebrating the Praises of God ;
and so will all undoubtedly do that shall be
admitted into the heavenly Choir.

Let us all begin then so to do, in this mi-
litant Part of the same Church here below.
By this we shall accustom ourselves to the
Employment of the next World ; for Heaven
is a Life of Devotion and Praise ; there we
shall continually see God, and eternally sing
Hallelujahs to Him : and nothing more dis-
poses and qualifies us for the Society of the
Blessed, than to have our Hearts devoutly
affected and ready tuned to the Praises of
God.

King *David* thought it no Disparagement
to his Royal Character, to lay out his Time,
and Study, and Strength, in composing Psalms
for the solemn Worship of God, and to pre-
side himself and join in the Consort. And
is this heavenly Exercise become now so con-
tempible a Thing, and looked upon with
such Indifferency, that few take care to join
in it, and fewer to perform it with any Rever-
ence

ence or Understanding? A sad Presage of a dying Zeal and Devotion!

Every pious and devout Person accounts it, with holy *David*, “a joyful and pleasant Thing to sing Praises unto God:” It is the pleasantest Part of all Piety, and therefore it is to be the Employment of Heaven; and they that can take no Pleasure therein, are Strangers to the Joys of blessed Souls, and unfit for the Society of Angels.

The Nature of public Worship requires, that it be vocal and audible; and when we pray, that God would “open our Lips;” it is a mocking the Almighty, except we intend, “that our Mouth shall shew forth his Praise.”

Nor is it sufficient that we barely sing; but to sing with a right Understanding of what we do, requires,

II. That when we sing Praises to God, we do it with pious and devout Affections, and with due Attention of Mind.

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth;” they must join the inward Devotion of the Mind to all their outward Performances.

True Devotion requires a due Concurrence of the Understanding and Affections; the sincere Elevation of the Spirit, being the Life of all our Psalmody, even that half which makes the whole accepted; without which,

which, the Tongues of Men or Angels are but “like sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.” But where the Devotion of the Heart concurs with the Melody of the Voice, there is the *Praise* of Angels, and the *Musick* of Heaven.

In order hereunto, there is some Preparation necessary before we begin. The Apprehension of the Greatness of God, and the Recollection of his Goodness and Mercies, must dispose our Hearts to Reverence and Thankfulness; and this will fix the Attention of our Minds as well as inflame our Affections.

King *David* therefore, the great Master of this holy Exercise, being about to celebrate the Praises of God upon his Harp; first takes care to set his Heart in Tune, and to have that devoutly affected with the divine Mercy and Goodness, *Psal* lvii. 8, 9, 10. “My Heart is “fixed;” or, as the Word properly signifies, “prepared; O God, my Heart is prepared; “I will sing and give Praise; awake up my “Glory, awake Lute and Harp. I will “praise Thee, O Lord, among the People: “I will sing unto Thee among the Nations; “for thy Mercy is great unto the Heavens, “and thy Truth unto the Clouds.” And *Psal*. lxxviii. 26. He calls upon all others to do the like: “Give Thanks, O Israel, unto “God the Lord, in the Congregations, from “the Ground of the Heart.”

Our

Our Hearts and Tongues must be perfect Unisons, and move together; which the Apostle expresses “ by singing and making “ Melody in our Hearts; and singing with “ Grace in our Hearts to the Lord,” *Eph. v. 19, Col. iii. 16.* How well soever we sing, we make no Melody to the Lord, unless our Hearts join in the Consort; but a Soul devoutly breathing forth an ardent Affection in holy Hymns, is the Melody of Angels. The heavenly Angels, that are our *Pattern*, sing with Purity of Intention, with devout Application, and with perfect Understanding; and the nearer our Worship of God comes to this heavenly Pattern, the more perfect it is, and the more acceptable to his divine Majesty: to which our blessed Lord directed us to have a constant Regard, when he taught us to pray, that God’s Will may be done by us on Earth, as it is by his holy Angels in Heaven.

We should therefore raise our Hearts to as high a Pitch of Devotion, in imitation of the heavenly Choir, as our present Distance, and the Frailty of our mortal Nature will permit.

And surely, it will mightily exalt our Affections, and stir us up to the most vigorous Devotion, if we consider, (what will more plainly appear hereafter *, with whom we sing and praise God, even with the Angels that

* In the Second Sermon.

that are present in our Assemblies, as well as all the Company of Heaven above.

Now as we sing with them, let us endeavour to sing like them, *with pious and devout Affections*, and with a seraphic Spirit. But if the Ardor of our Devotion cannot rise to the same Note; yet let the Sincerity of our Endeavour keep us in an agreeable Key. In order to attain this, we must frame our Minds and Affections to the Purport and Importance of the Psalms, and so accommodate them to ourselves, as to make them become really the genuine Expressions and Devotions of our own Hearts, by *understanding* and considering well what we sing.

III. To advance a step nearer to the Pattern of the heavenly Choir, and the Purport and Direction of the Text, we must, to the best of our Power, sing Praises to God in his solemn Worship, with Harmony and Melody, with *Understanding*; “Sing Praises skilfully to his most excellent Majesty,” as Bishop *Patrick* paraphrases the Text.

Wherein we make the best Use of that Gift of Speech, which was given us to express our Thoughts by an articulate Voice, exciting our own and others Affections, the more fervently to celebrate the Praises of our bountiful Creator.

The Apostle exhorting to the Use of Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, bids us “sing with Melody;” agreeably to the
Direction

Direction of the holy Psalmist, in the first Verse of the Psalm before us, "Sing unto God with the Voice of Melody."

We are bound to serve God, as well as we are able, with the best that we have, both for Matter and Manner; and to offer Him a less perfect Service, when it is in our Power to do better, is to offer him the Blind and the Lame: Which Offerings, though He will accept them at the Hands of such as can give no better; yet if they are offered by those who have greater Abilities, we may rationally conclude He will reject them with Indignation, as a Slight and an Affront to his most adorable Majesty.

Consider then whether we ought not to use some Care and Endeavour to have our Voices regulated to sing Praises to God, to the best of our Power, with Melody and Harmony; that we may sing the Psalms of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, after his Pattern; of whom St Augustine * gives this Character: "David was eminently skilled in composing Psalms, and loved musical Harmony; not from sensual Pleasure, such as Men commonly take in Music; but with a devout and holy Will and Desire of glorifying God thereby;" agreeable to what is recorded of him in holy Scripture.

The best and most excellent Being is to be served with the best and most excellent Operations

* De Civit. Dei, l. 17. c. 14.

rations of our Faculties, whom it becomes us to serve, not only with our Nature, but our Skill and Understanding.

Harmony and Melody are of great Use and Efficacy, both to compose the Affections, and to excite Devotion in the solemn Worship of God. The Soul of Man is naturally delighted with Melody; and the animal Spirits, which serve to excite the Affections, move in Conformity to the Impressions they receive from the musical Sounds. Hence it is, that Melody and musical Airs do please and excite the Affections; but ill Cadencies and harsh Discords are offensive.

“The very Harmony of Sounds, saith the learned and judicious *Hooker* *, “being
“rightly framed and carried from the Ear to
“the spiritual Faculties of our Souls, is, by
“a native Puissance and Efficacy, greatly
“available to bring to a perfect Temper
“whatsoever is there troubled; apt as well
“to quicken the Spirits, as to allay that which
“is too eager; sovereign against Melancholy
“and Despair, forcible to draw forth Tears
“of Devotion, if the Mind be such as can
“yield them, and able to move and to moderate all Affections.”

Whereof we have two remarkable Instances in the holy Scripture: The one is in *1 Sam. xvi.* “when an evil Spirit from the
“Lord troubled Saul;” his Physicians †, called

* *Eccl. Pol. B. 5.* † *Vide Synop. Crit. in loc.*

called there his Servants, who, from their Learning and Experience, well knew both the Power of Music, and the Nature of his Distemper, advised the King, that “ a Man
“ should be sought out, who was a cunning
“ Player on a Harp; and it shall come to pass,
“ say they, when the evil Spirit from God is
“ upon thee, that he shall play with his Hand,
“ and thou shalt be well:” Whereupon *David* being recommended for his excellent Skill upon the Harp, the King sends for him, and the Success answered their Judgments; for, *verse 23*, “ When the evil Spirit was upon
“ Saul, David took an Harp, and played
“ with his Hand; so Saul was refreshed, and
“ was well, and the evil Spirit departed from
“ him.”

It is thought that *Saul's* Distemper was a deep Melancholy, even to Madness; which the Devil, by divine Permission, made use of to torment him. For * whose evil Purposes of tempting, vexing and inciting Men to Envy, Anger, and Despair, there is none so fit in the whole Body as this black Humour; for it casts a black Cloud over the Fancy and Imagination; and through that black Veil all things seem dismal and horrid; and then the *evil Spirit* makes use of this to drive Men into frightful Apprehensions, Hatred and Murder.

Now the agreeableness of Music to human Nature, and the charming Harmony of
David's

* A Lap. in loc.

David's Harp, exhilarated the Mind of *Saul*, put a lively Motion into his animal Spirits, and so dissipated that black Cloud, that this melancholy Disposition, the Instrument which the evil Spirit used to afflict him, being removed, the Affliction ceased; and so, as in the Text, "Saul was refreshed and was well, " and the evil Spirit departed from him."

The other Instance is, 2 *Kings* iii. 15. When the three Kings, *Jehoram*, *Jehosaphat*, and the King of *Edom*, distressed for want of Water, with their Armies, apply themselves to the prophet *Elisha*. Because the Spirit of Prophecy was not always present with the Prophets, so as to deliver Oracles when they pleased; and because the Prophet's Mind was disturbed both with Sorrow for the Departure of *Elijah*, and with Indignation against the Sins of *Jehoram*; and the Spirit of God, or of Prophecy, rests only on a calm sedate Mind, whose Passions are allayed, according to the Observation of the ancient *Jew*: The Prophet therefore calls for a Minstrel to compose his Mind; and it came to pass "when the Minstrel played, that the "Hand of the Lord came upon him," and then he prophesied both a supply of Water and Victory.

That the Prophet might be prepared to receive a divine Revelation, it was fit his Mind should be composed, and in a devout Temper lifted up to God. For this End, he called
for

for a *Levite* (according to the Critics on the Place) to play and sing before him the Praises of God, from the *Psalms* of *David*; both vocal and instrumental Music being used to excite Devotion; and by the Prophet here, to compose and prepare his Mind for a divine Communication. The Disposition of the Soul depending much upon the Temper of the Body, it must needs be that, according to the right Temper or Disorder thereof, a Man is more or less disposed to, and fit for divine Offices.

The great Efficacy of Music to this Purpose, made the ancient Philosophers account it an Invention of the Gods, to soften the natural Passions of Men, and to move the Affections to Virtue. Hence *Plato* advises, that the Instructors of Youth teach them Music, to regulate the Motions of the Soul. And *Pythagoras*, to calm the Passions and compose the Mind, made his Disciples begin and end the Day with it.

Musical Harmony is also a useful Assistant to Devotion, by raising our Spirits to such a rapturous Frame, as enables us to praise God with the greater Fervency and Elevation of Soul. An Example whereof we have in *St Augustine* *, who thus confesses to God the Transports of his Devotion, from the ravishing Harmony of the Church; "O how I
" wept at thy Hymns and Songs, being rav-
" ished at the Voices of thy sweet-sounding
" Church!

* Confess, l. 9. c. 6.

“ Church ! Those sweet Voices did pierce
 “ my Ears, and thy Truth distilled into my
 “ Heart, and from thence I felt myself in-
 “ flamed with Piety and Devotion.”

But to return to the holy Oracles of God :
 We find in the ancient Schools of the Pro-
 phets, 1 *Sam.* x. 5. 2 *Kings* ii. 3. That they
 applied themselves not only to the Study of
 the Law, but also to vocal and instrumental
 Music, for singing the Praises of God *,
 where they are said to *prophecy*, from singing
 prophetic and inspired Hymns †.

The Royal Prophet also, “ the Man after
 “ God’s own Heart,” appointed the Use of
 musical Instruments in the solemn Worship of
 God; as “ Cymbals, Psalteries, and Harps,”
 1 *Chron.* xvi. which is said to be “ according
 “ to the Commandment of David, and of
 “ Gad the King’s Seer, and Nathan the Pro-
 “ phet.” And, to put it beyond all Objec-
 tion, “ this is said to be the Commandment
 “ of the Lord by his Prophets,” 2 *Chron.*
 xxix. 25. and 2 *Chron.* v. the Lord himself
 expressed his Approbation of such Music, in
 the Use of Psalms and Hymns in his solemn
 Worship. For, “ as the Levites, which were
 “ the Singers, being arrayed in white Linen,
 “ stood with Cymbals, and Psalteries, and
 “ Harps;---It came to pass as they made
 “ one Sound to be heard in praising and
 “ thanking the Lord; and when they lifted
 “ up their Voice with the Instruments of
 “ Music,

* *Corn. Lap. in Loc.* † *Torniellus.*

“Music, and praised the Lord;” in token of his divine Pleasure and Approbation, it is added, “The Glory of the Lord filled the House of God.”

The Son of *Sirach* also speaking of the Practice of the *Jewish* Church in his Time, says, “The Singers sang Praises with their Voices; with great Variety of Sounds was there made sweet Melody,” *Ecclus.* 50. In a word, the whole Book of Psalms was composed, and set to be sung with variety of musical Instruments. Psalmody is recommended to us also from the Example of our blessed Lord; *St Matt.* xxvi. 30. where we find the holy Jesus singing an Hymn with his Disciples, a little before his Passion. And doubtless it was with such Melody and Sweetness, as became that sacred Mouth, which had no Imperfection to give a Check to the Skill of the Singer.

And to this Day, the *Dutch* and *French* Protestants have all the Psalms and other Hymns set to Music: And in most reformed Churches all over *Europe*, where they can be at the Charge of them, they have Organs; as in *Hesse*, in *Holland*, in *Switzerland*, in the *Palatinate*, and all over *Germany* *.

For if we are to praise God with Melody, then a grave and solemn Music, (such as the Organ) which is useful to govern the Melody, and

* See Dr *Durell's* View of the Foreign Churches.

and also to advance it, is a proper and suitable Attendant on this Part of divine Service.

So that *Singing*, properly so called, that is, with Harmony and Melody, affecting the Soul with Raptures of holy Joy and Devotion, has been judged the most proper Way of celebrating the Praises of God, by the universal Consent and Practice of the Church in all Ages.

To which I shall not need to add more than to shew the Conformity thereof to our Pattern of the heavenly Choir, (the best Exemplar we can propose for our solemn Devotions here on Earth) whom we find constantly singing the Praises of God, with musical Harmony and Melody, *Rev. v. 8.* "In the Vision of the Twenty Four Elders round the Throne of God," they are represented to be every one of them singing with Harps in their Hands. Again, *Rev. xiv. 2.* "I heard from Heaven, saith St *John*, the Voice of Harpers harping with their Harps, and singing before the Throne of God;" And Chap. xv. in another Vision, he saw in Heaven a zealous Multitude, noted by "a Sea of Glass mingled with Fire, having the Harps of Gold in their Hands, (that is, such as were wont to be used in the Temple, called the "musical Instruments of God," 1 *Chron. xvi. 42.*) and they sung the Song of Moses, the

"Servant

“ Servant of God, and the Song of the
“ Lamb.”

From which we are again instructed, when we sing Praises to God, to do it with *Understanding*. *Non bacchantium more vocibus incompōsitis, &c.* says a learned Commentator on the Text. Not as Revelers, with confused Noise; but with Melody, with competent Skill in Psalmody; and, if it may be, with such musical Airs, as may both compose and elevate the Spirits of ourselves and others.

Thus it appears that singing with Melody and Harmony, is the most genuine, the most ancient and heavenly Way of praising God: A harsh untunable Singing, without Skill or Understanding, having no agreeable Influence upon the Affections, cannot so usefully minister to Devotion.

Finally, Let us ever remember, that our Melody in Singing be accompanied with pious and devout Affections, with such Attention and Purity of Mind, with such Harmony and Sweetness of Temper, as may render our Worship a true Emblem and Foretaste of the Joys of Heaven, (then we may entertain ourselves with that Joy in God, which is the most refined Sort of Delight we can enjoy on Earth) that from praising God *to the best of our Power*, in this
militant

militant and imperfect State, we may be translated to sing eternal Hallelujahs in the glorious Choir of the Church triumphant in Heaven; through the Merits of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ:

To whom, &c.



The



The Devout Psalmodist.

S E R M O N II.

P S A L. xlvii. 7.

—*Sing ye Praises with Understanding.*



S our great and bountiful Creator hath bestowed upon us the noble and distinguishing Faculties of Reason and Understanding, so he justly requires (as the chief End for which they were given us) that we should exert them to his Glory, in his Worship and Service. The vegetative and irrational Part of the Creation are said to praise God, as manifest Instances of his almighty Power and Providence. But *Man* is as it were

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the

the *Priest* of the visible Creation, to offer up directly the Praises of all the Creatures, to the great Lord and Creator of the Whole; being the only Creature, in this lower World, that is formed with a Capacity of Judgment and Consideration, and consequently of worshipping and praising God with Understanding.---The Duty enjoined by the holy *Psalmist* in the Text is --- “ Sing ye Praises with “ Understanding;” which obliges us,

I. Unanimously to join in singing Psalms and Praises to God in his solemn Worship.

II. To sing with pious and devout Affections, and with due Attention of Mind.

III. To do it, to the best of our Power, with Melody and Harmony.

IV. With due Reverence.

Of the *Three* former I have treated in the foregoing Discourse, and come now to handle the Fourth, viz.

IV. That we ought to perform this holy Exercise with a suitable Reverence, seriously considering the glorious Object of our Worship, to whom we Sing, and offer up the Sacrifice of our Praises; and that is, to the great Lord and Creator of Heaven and Earth; before whom, with profound Reverence, the holy Seraphins cover their Faces, and all the Angels

Angels and Saints of Heaven fall down, and cast their Crowns before his Throne.

This Consideration will oblige us to sing Praises to his divine Majesty with *Reverence*; and the neglect of it, discovers that we do not do it with *Understanding*; that we neither understand nor consider what we are doing.

If we considered the infinite Distance between God and ourselves, the transcendent Glory and Majesty of the great Lord and Sovereign of the World, and ourselves vile and sinful Worms; it must needs imprint an awful Reverence on our Minds, in all solemn Acts of Worship. God is not pleased with the "Sacrifice of Fools;" it is a "reasonable Service" he requires; that Men consider what they do, and whom they worship.

Public Worship is an external Signification of the Reverence and Devotion of the Mind; therefore all public Duties of Religion ought to carry with them such visible Marks and Testimonies of Honour and Reverence, as are correspondent to the inward Reverence of our Minds, and to the glorious Majesty of that great God whom we worship.

The pious and venerable Author of *The Whole Duty of Man*, (Chap. II. § II. of that excellent Book) reckoning up the religious Duties that we owe immediately unto God, particularly mentions the *honouring* of Him,

and thus explains it. "It is paying Him such
 " a Reverence and Respect, as belongs to so
 " great a Majesty; and that is either inward
 " or outward; the inward, is the exalting
 " Him in our Hearts, having always the
 " highest and most excellent Esteem of Him:
 " The outward, is the manifesting and shew-
 " ing forth that inward Respect, (Ch. v. § 25.)
 " by such humble and reverent Gestures in our
 " Approaches to God, as may both express
 " the inward Reverence of our Souls, and
 " may also pay Him some tribute from our
 " very Bodies, with which the Apostle com-
 " mands us to glorify God, as well as with
 " our Souls," 1 Cor. vi. 20.

The inward Reverence of the Mind, I
 have already treated of, under the *second* Head.
 That which I now insist on, is the outward
 Reverence of the Body; that we perform this
 eminent Part of divine Worship, in a *proper*
and reverent Posture of Worship.

And what that is, we shall best learn from
 the holy Scripture, the most authentic Re-
 cord of the divine Will, and the surest Guide
 in his Worship. Which I shall examine
 under the following Enquiries:

1st, I shall enquire what Posture of Re-
 verence was appointed and used in singing
 Psalms, and Hymns of Praise, in the Church
 of God under the Old Testament.

2^{dly},

2dly, What Posture of Reverence is proposed to us, for our Imitation, under the New, by the Practice of the holy Angels in the heavenly Choir.

3dly, I shall from thence infer the Obligation and Reasonableness of our Conformity to these authentic Examples: Supposing all the while that I am reasoning with such, as profess to make the holy Scriptures the Rule and Standard of their Practice. There are some inadvertent Persons in most Congregations, who perform this holy Office of divine Worship, as if it had nothing in it *Divine*, or *that related to God*, or *his Worship*; with such Indecency and Irreverence, as too plainly discovers they little regard, either *what*, or *who*, or *to whom* they sing. For the rectifying of this Abuse, and recovering a due Regard and Reverence to this heavenly Exercise;

1st, I shall enquire what Posture of Reverence was appointed and used in singing Psalms, and Hymns of Praise, in the Church of God under the Old Testament. And here we find the Royal Prophet, “by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake, (2 Sam. xxiii. 2.) “appointing the Levites in the solemn Worship of God, to STAND every Morning to “thank and praise the Lord; and also at “Even,” 1 Chron. xxiii. 30. Which Rule was observed in the Temple afterwards built by

Solomon; as we read, 2 *Chron.* v. 12. The *Levites*, which were the Singers, --- "being arrayed in white Linen, did STAND at the East End of the Altar, and with them an Hundred and Twenty Priests sounding with Trumpets; and as the Trumpeters and Singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord," God signified his Approbation, by filling the House with a Cloud, the Symbol of his peculiar Presence.

As we here find the *Levites standing*, according to the Law before given them, to sing Praises to God: So 2 *Chron.* vii. 6. upon the like Performance of the "Levites with Instruments of Music of the Lord, which David the King had made to praise the Lord," all the People are expressly said to observe the same reverent Posture; "and all Israel stood," to join in the solemn Praises of God. We have also, 2 *Chron.* xx. 18, 19. the several Gestures of Prayer and Praise expressly distinguished, and applied to their respective Parts of divine Worship. *First*, They humbled themselves before God, and prayed, either Kneeling, or prostrate on the Ground; for it is said, "All Judah and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord." And when they come to sing Praises to God, the Posture of their Reverence, in this Part of their Service,

vice, is there also set down: "And the Levites
"of the Children of the Kohathites, and
"of the Children of the Korhites, stood
"up to praise the Lord God of Israel with
"a loud Voice on high."

So again upon *Hezekiah's* Reformation, and restoring the Purity of God's Worship in the Temple, *2 Chron. xxix.* according to the Institution of King *David* before mentioned; "The Levites did STAND with the
"Instruments of David,--to sing the Song
"of the Lord. And they sung Praises with
"Gladness, and bowed their Heads, and
"worshipped:" And Verse 35, as a Testimony of the Approbation of the holy Spirit of God, it is added, "So the Service of
"the House of the Lord was set in order."

The same Rule and Order of King *David* was restored at the Building of the Second Temple after the Captivity, *Neb. xij. 46.* compared with Chap. ix. 5. where, after they had upon a solemn Occasion confessed their Sins and prayed, the Levites call aloud unto the People, (instructing them how to demean themselves in this other part of the solemn Worship) saying, "STAND
"up and bless the Lord your God for ever
"and ever."

These Instances are abundantly sufficient to shew the special Gesture of Reverence, appointed and used in singing Psalms in the Church of God under the Old Testament.

STANDING indeed has ever been accounted a Gesture of expressing Honour and Reverence. So in *Job* xxix. 7, 8. "When I went out to the Gate, and when I prepared my Seat, the Aged arose and stood UP." And when the Lord rebukes his People for treating Him with less Reverence than they would do a mortal Prince, *Mal.* i. 8. saying, "Offer it now to thy Governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy Person?" The Application is very obvious to the Case in hand. He plainly teaches us, that the customary Expressions and Forms of Reverence that are used in a Nation, to do civil Honour and Respect to our Superiors, are also to be used to express our Honour and Reverence to his divine Majesty.

This reverent Posture of STANDING at singing Praises to God, has universally obtained in all Ages of the Church. *St Basil*, describing the Practice of the Church of *Neocæsarea* in this Particular, says, "The People rising from Prayer, STAND UP to sing Psalms." And in the Conclusion adds, that "this Custom was consonant and agreeable to all the Churches of God *."

A Posture very suitable with respect to the Action itself: "The Erection of the Body fully expressing the lifting up of the Heart in Joy: Whence it is, that *rejoicing*, is
" in

* *Ep.* 63. ad Cler. *Neocæs.*

“ in Scripture called *the lifting up of the*
“ *Head.* So then, Joy being a lifting up of
“ the Soul, and Praise and Thanksgiving
“ being Effects of Joy, cannot be more fit-
“ ly expressed, than by Erection and lifting
“ up of the Body, *STANDING in the Courts*
“ *of the Lord,* when we sing Praises unto
“ Him †.

This Posture of Reverence was appointed by holy *David*, under the Conduct and Inspiration of the same holy Spirit by which he composed the Psalms: And the same Psalms being still used, why should not the like Reverence be observed by us, which he, by the Spirit of God, being a Prophet, appointed to be used with them?

It is very absurd to say, that this is abolished, as a part of the Ceremonial Law of the Old Testament. For this was appointed many hundred Years after the Law was given; neither was it a Shadow of any thing to come, nor any way typical of Christ, nor inherent to any Sacrament or Sacrifice of the Law; and so no way abolished by the Coming of Christ, the Antitype and Substance of the Levitical Sacrifices, nor to expire with the Jewish Worship; but a proper Gesture, and Institution of Reverence, to attend the Duty of solemn Praise to God in the Christian Church. Which brings me,

II. To the *Second Enquiry, viz.* What
B 5 Posture

† Bishop Sparrow's *Rationale*, p. 45.

Posture of Reverence is proposed for our Example under the New Testament in singing Praises to God, by the Practice of the holy Angels in the heavenly Choir. And this we find to be the same which was appointed and used in the Church of God under the Old.

For in St *John's* Vision of the Increase of the Christian Church, to so great a Multitude which no Man could number, they are all represented "STANDING before the Throne of God, with a loud Voice praising God, and saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb," *Rev. vii. 9, 10.*

If the holy Angels are allowed to know and do the Will of God in Heaven, then here we have a Testimony of the divine Will; and that we should both join in singing Praises to the Glory of God, and also perform it in the reverent Posture of *STANDING*, as represented in that prophetic Vision of the Christian Church. So in the Vision *Isaiah* saw of "the Lord in his Glory, sitting on a Throne high and lifted up, he saw the glorious Seraphims *STANDING* and praising God, and crying one to another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory," *Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3.*

As it is the continual Employment of the blessed Angels in Heaven, to be ever praising and glorifying God; so in the various Representations

presentations and Visions of their heavenly Worship and Service, they constantly appear in uniform and suitable Gestures of Reverence.

Accordingly St *John* again, in another Vision of the heavenly Choir, representeth the Christian Church worshipping in the same Posture of Reverence, "STANDING, and
"singing the Song of Moses, the Servant of
"God, and the Song of the Lamb; say-
"ing, Great and marvellous are thy Works,
"Lord God Almighty; just and true are
"thy Ways, thou King of Saints. Who
"shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify
"thy Name?" *Rev: xv. 3, 4.*

Thus the Angels of God in Heaven, as the learned Commentators observe, use Gestures of Worship according to their Nature; whereby they testify and express their Reverence to God, and acknowledge the infinite Distance between God and themselves. And though, as being spiritual Substances, they are invisible to us, yet when it pleases God by special Dispensation to represent them and their Devotions visible to mortal Eyes, and in human Forms, they are made to appear in such a Posture of Reverence as is suitable to human Nature, and doubtless correspondent to their own, STANDING, and singing Praises before the Throne of God; as a Pattern held forth, and proposed for our Example and Imitation.

From whence it is very obvious to infer,

III. The

III. The Obligation and Reasonableness of our Conformity to those authentic Examples. The Usage of the Church of God in holy Scripture, confirmed by the Practice of the Church triumphant in Heaven, is a plain Indication of the divine Will, and a Direction for the Manner and Posture of our Reverence, in the same Duty of singing Praises to God.

The holy Angels, who dwell in those Regions of Light and Immortality, and are continually before the Throne of the Most High, know the Will of God so perfectly, and do it so naturally, that holy *David* sets it out in variety of Phrase with great Elegancy, *Psalms* ciii. “Ye Angels of his---
“that fulfil his Commandments, and hearken
“en to the Voice of his Words:---Ye Servants of his, that do his Pleasure.”

They know that infinite Distance between the infinite God and themselves; though they are very excellent and glorious, yet are they finite Creatures; and therefore adore him with the most awful Reverence: For though the Angels are nearer unto God in Perfection of Nature than Men, yet still the Distance between God and them is infinite, as it is also between God and Men. But the Angels see their Distance more perfectly, and know more of the glorious Perfections of God than Men do; and the more they know of him, the more they adore and reverence his

his divine Majesty, and are the more humble in worshipping before his Throne, because they see the Greatness of their Distance.

What they see in the Original, we may see plainly enough in the Transcript, and Record of the divine Will, the holy Scriptures; which sufficiently instruct us, with what Reverence we ought to come before him in all Acts of divine Worship.

Consider also that the holy Angels, which are present with us in our Congregations, and join their Devotions with ours, do undoubtedly use the like Reverence, that they do immediately before the Throne of God in Heaven. For it is probable, as *Origen* observes upon mentioning those Words of the Psalmist; "The Angel of the Lord incampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them:" that when the faithful Servants of God are assembled together in his Church, their Guardian Angels are there present with them, so as to make a double Church, one of Men, and another of Angels. To which the holy Psalmist has respect, when he says, *Psal. cxxxviii. 1.* "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole Heart; before the Gods will I sing Praise unto thee:" that is, "In the public Assembly, in the Presence of the holy Angels which attend there, the Witnesses of our Performances, and Assistants and Partners of our Praises;" as *Dr Hammond* and *Dr Nichols* paraphrase the Words.

St Paul also argues from the same Topic, for Decency in the Church, "because of the Angels," 1 Cor. xi. 10.

And St Chrysostom, taking notice of the irreverent Behaviour of some in the Church, reproves them with this Argument: "Knowest thou not, that thou standest with the Angels? thou singest with them; thou praisest God with them; and standest thou * laughing?" How irreverent then and indecent is it, in respect both to the Duty we are about, and those glorious Spirits that are present, and join with us in our solemn Praises of God, for us to SIT when they STAND, or use a Reverence correspondent to it!

Upon which Consideration, the holy Father last mentioned admired that any should behave themselves rudely or irreverently in the Church, who are admitted there to sing the same Hymns with Cherubins and Seraphins, with Angels and Archangels.

Nor are the Angels of Heaven so far severed from us in their kind and manner of Worship, but that, between the Law of their heavenly Devotions, and of Men on Earth, in this our State of Mortality, there is such Correspondence as makes it expedient for us to know, in some sort, the manner of their Worship, for the more perfect Direction of ours.

Would the holy Angels acknowledge themselves

* Hom. 24. Act. Apostol.

selves *Fellow-Servants* with Men; but that both having one Lord, there must be some kind of Law which is common to both, whereunto their Obedience, being more perfect, is the best Rule and Pattern for ours?

Or would the Apostles, speaking of that which belongeth to Saints, as they are linked together in the Bond of Spiritual Society, (*Eph. iii. 10. 1 Tim. v. 21. 1 Pet. i. 12.*) so often make mention how Angels are delighted therewith; if in Things publicly done in the Church we are not to have some respect to what the Angels of Heaven do? or, Would our blessed Lord have taught us to pray for, if it had not been our Duty to practise, a Conformity to their holy Examples, to whom, as St. Paul signifies, *1 Cor. xi. 10.* there is some regard to be had, even about the outward Orders of the Church, which serve for Decency in divine Worship; who like us best, when we are most like them in all Parts of decent and reverent Behaviour?

So that the Law of Angels in Heaven may well be allowed to regulate the Worship of the Church of God on Earth; for they are not *two Churches*, but *two Parts* of the same Church; the one triumphant in Heaven, the other militant on Earth; and they have both the same Head and King.

Nor is it to be doubted, but that the Worship which the holy Angels perform is very pure, and according to the Will of God;
and

and they, being Members of that Part of the Church whose Worship is purest, and who more perfectly know the Will of God, are, in all Reason, to be the Pattern of our Conformity, and the Rule of our Worship. Their constant and uniform Practice, is surely the best Comment on my Text; which, if duly observed, would make the Church to resemble a Choir of Angels. The Apostle tells us, that “whatsoever was written” *Rom. xv. 4.* “aforetime, was written for our Learning,” and what are we to learn from all that has been written before us, of the Reverence used both by Angels in Heaven, and holy Men on Earth, in singing Praises to God; but to imitate those excellent Patterns in singing Praises with the like Reverence? And then surely are the public Duties of Religion best ordered, when the Worship of God, in the Church militant, agrees with the Devotions of the Church triumphant.

This condemns that inadvertent and irreverent Practice of *SITTING* at the Singing of Psalms.

The Purport and End of all solemn divine Worship, requires both external and internal Reverence, to express the Honour and Homage we design to pay unto God thereby. Now the usual Gestures of Honour and Reverence to God, mentioned in the holy Scriptures, are *KNEELING* and *STANDING*; *kneeling* is generally appropriated to Prayer, and

and *standing* to Praise, as appears from the forecited Testimonies. For Psalms of Praise, sung to the Honour and Glory of God, being an eminent Part of divine Worship, consequently require a proper Posture of Worship and Reverence.

Sitting indeed is a Gesture too free and familiar to pretend Adoration or Worship. The Revelation of God's Will in his holy Word, is to guide and direct us in his Worship; which will not allow us to use such Gestures in his solemn Worship, as are Signs of Equality, Familiarity, or Contempt among Men.

Sitting has been also from of old accounted a Gesture of Sorrow and Mourning. So *Job's* three Friends, that came to condole with him, "SAT down with him on the Ground." In which respect it is unsuitable to the Office of Psalmody and singing Praises. Sometimes it denotes Superiority and Sovereignty: So in the Vision of *Isaiah* beforementioned, the Lord of Glory SAT upon his Throne; but the holy Angels stood and sang Praises to his divine Majesty. They therefore that SIT at the Time when others are *standing* with Reverence, to celebrate and sing the Praises of God, are so unlike to devout Worshippers, that it rather looks as if they sat in Church to rival God on his Throne of Glory, and to receive the Adorations and Reverences of the rest of the Congregation.

If all cannot join in the Melody of Singing, they can and ought to join at least in the Devotion and Reverence that attends it.

God Almighty hath so made us, that we are apt, and cannot help it, to represent our inward Affections by outward Expressions. And here is the Ground in Nature and in Reason of all the Rites of external Worship. For while a Soul and Body are vitally united, they will naturally receive mutual Impressions from each other. If there be therefore any inward Devotion and Reverence in the Mind, we cannot without offering Violence to our Natures forbear to express it by outward reverential Signs, and Gestures of Adoration in the solemn Worship of God.

So that outward Irreverence in divine Worship, is an Overt-Act and Evidence of an indevout and irreverent Mind; because the inward Devotion of the Soul, will naturally actuate and dispose the Body to a suitable external Reverence wherever it really is. The *Form* of Godliness, it is possible, may sometimes be without the inward *Power* of it; but wherever the Power of true Devotion and Godliness is in the Heart, it will naturally appear in the outward Form and Reverence of the Body.

A due Consideration of the different Use of the Psalms from other Portions of holy Scripture, would contribute also to rectify the Defect of Reverence in this Part of divine

vine Worship. For the Psalms ought to be distinguished from those Portions of Scripture which we read for your Instruction and Increase in spiritual Knowledge, whilst you sit and silently attend; whereas the Use of the Psalms, and all the Hymns of Praise, belongs to the whole Congregation, every Person being not silently to hear, but to join therein both with Heart and Voice, and to make it his own proper Act of Worship to God. And since we STAND UP with Reverence to praise God in the Use of one Translation or Version of the Psalms, by parity of Reason we should do so in the other.

To conclude: Let all Sluggishness and Irreverence be for ever banished from the solemn Worship of God, with all Prejudice and Obstinacy; and let us act like Men truly convinced of what has been urged under the former Heads, and of the Obligations that lie upon us with regard to them.

It is incident and common to human Nature to err; but to persist in an Error after Conviction is impious and diabolical.

The most pious and devout Person is liable to Mistake and Inadvertency; but upon the first Discovery of his Error, every sincere and good Man does presently retract and reform.

To celebrate the Praises of God is the most heavenly Part of divine Service, and a Duty of the greatest Importance. It highly concerns

concerns us therefore that we rightly perform this heavenly Exercise; and since it hath pleased Almighty God to give us such plain Directions relating to it in his holy Word; it behoves us to express a due Regard and Conformity thereunto, as the infallible Declaration of his Will, and the safest Guide in his Worship.

Since the Church of God in all Ages hath used this reverent Posture of **STANDING** in singing Praises to God; and the Almighty hath signified his divine Will and Approbation thereof, in the Appointment and Practice of the Church under the Old Testament; and under the New, in that prophetic Vision of the innumerable Multitude of the Christian Church, represented to St *John*, Rev. vii. 9, 10. wherein they appeared all **STANDING** and praising God: Is it not highly reasonable we should conform our Practice to this divinely-approved Posture of Reverence, in singing Praises to our great Creator?

And since the holy Angels in Heaven, that so perfectly know and perform the divine Will, are so often represented, for our Example, **STANDING** and singing Praises to God; and all that shall ever be admitted into the heavenly Choir shall undoubtedly sing in the same reverent Posture; let us all now perform this heavenly Office according to the heavenly Pattern, that God's Will, in this particular Instance of our Duty, "may be done in Earth as it is in Heaven."

Still

Still remembering, that to sing like Angels,

1st, We must all unanimously join in celebrating the Praises of God.

2^{dly}, We must sing with pious and devout Affections, and with due Attention of Mind.

3^{dly}, With Harmony and Melody, to the best of our Power.

4^{thly}, As with inward Devotion of Mind, so with outward Reverence of the Body.

Finally, Let us be sure that our outward Reverence proceed from an inward and awful Veneration of the glorious Majesty of God. Let the Erection of our Bodies be a sincere Expression of the Elevation or lifting up our Souls to God, and of the inward Reverence of our Hearts. Let us always compose ourselves for divine Worship with the most serious Intention of our Souls, and apply ourselves to it with the most humble, fervent and devout Affections: For which, let us constantly beg the divine Assistance, as our most excellent Church instructs us to do, in the Collect appointed for the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

“ Almighty and merciful God, of whose
“ only Gift it cometh that thy faithful Peo-
“ ple do unto thee true and laudable Ser-
“ vice; Grant, we beseech thee, that we
“ may so faithfully serve thee in this Life,
“ that

“ that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly Promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

To whom, &c.



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